

# **2021-2022 Benchmark Assessments**

## **Public Act 48 Section 104a**

### **Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions**

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## Purpose and Requirements of PA 48 Section 104a

[Public Act \(P.A.\) 48 Section 104a](#) requires districts to implement a benchmark assessment system for the 2021-2022 school year for the purpose of measuring student proficiency in reading and mathematics. In addition, [P.A. 48 sec. 98b](#) requires districts to choose a benchmark assessment or assessments that are aligned to state standards and are administered to determine whether students are making meaningful progress towards mastery of these standards. Districts must present the results from the benchmark assessments administered under section 104a to local boards.

Section 104a outlines that the system must meet all the following:

1. Within the first 9 weeks of school, districts must administer one or more benchmark assessments to all students in grades K to 8 to measure proficiency in reading and mathematics.
2. The district may choose to administer any combination of the following benchmark options:
  - a. a benchmark assessment or assessments from a Michigan Department of Education (MDE) approved provider list
  - b. a benchmark assessment or assessments that contain progress monitoring tools
  - c. a local benchmark assessment or assessments
3. The district must administer the benchmark assessment(s) again before the last day of the school year.
4. The district, to the extent practical, must administer the same benchmark assessment(s) that it administered to students in previous school years.
5. Within 30 days of administration, districts must provide student data from the benchmark assessment(s) to the student's parent or legal

guardian.

6. Districts administering local benchmark assessments and assessments with progress monitoring tools must report the following to the MDE and the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI):
  - a. the assessment(s) administered
  - b. how the assessment(s) measure change, including any losses
  - c. the district's plans for addressing any losses in learning
7. Within 30 days of administration, districts administering one or more of the assessments from the MDE-approved provider list must send benchmark data including fall 2020 to fall 2021 growth, if available, to MDE.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. Will the results of the benchmark assessments be used for accountability purposes?

The current law does **not** require these data be used for accountability purposes.

#### 2. Will the results of the benchmark assessments be used for teacher evaluation purposes?

There are no requirements in the current legislation to use the results for teacher evaluation purposes. Districts could make the local decision to incorporate these results in teacher evaluations as part of Student Learning Objectives or other measurements.

#### 3. Where can I find information on the benchmark provisions of the current legislation?

Information specific to the benchmark assessment provisions [P.A. 48 sec. 104a](#) is located on the [MDE Benchmark Assessment web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/MDE-benchmarkassessments](http://www.michigan.gov/MDE-benchmarkassessments)).

## Benchmark Options Allowed

Keeping in mind, PA 48 sec. 104a specifies districts must, to the extent practical, administer benchmark assessments used in prior school years. Districts have the flexibility to administer one or more of the following benchmark assessment options.

### Benchmark Assessments from MDE Approved Providers

Provider	Products	Funding	Contact Information
Curriculum Associates	I-Ready	\$12.50 per membership student in grades K-8  (See the How to Request Funding section later in this document for details.)	<b>Vikki Halstead</b> 989-577-0305 vhalstead@cainc.com  <b>Jeff Tompkins</b> 313-316-0141 jtompkins@cainc.com
Data Recognition Corporation (DRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smarter Balance Interim Assessments (grades 3-8)</li> <li>• Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments (grades k-2)</li> </ul>	Available at no cost to districts	<b>Christi Linton</b> 301-865-9859 clinton@datarecognitioncorp.com  <b>Ryan Nelson</b> 763-268-2361 rnelson@datarecognitioncorp.com  <b>Smarter Interims:</b> 877-560-8378, option 2 misupport@datarecognitioncorp.com  <b>Early Literacy and Mathematics</b> <a href="#">MDE Early Literacy and Mathematics web page</a> 877-560-8378 option 3 mde-oeaa@michigan.gov.
NWEA	MAP Suite	\$12.50 per membership student in grades K-8	<b>Pam Jones</b> Pam.jones@nwea.org
Renaissance	Star	\$12.50 per membership student in grades K-8	<b>La Keshia Neal,</b> lakeshia.neal@renaissance.com

Additional information provided by the approved benchmark assessment vendors is located on the [MDE Benchmark Assessment web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/MDE-benchmarkassessments](http://www.michigan.gov/MDE-benchmarkassessments)).

## **Benchmark Assessments that Contain Progress Monitoring Tools**

Districts may administer:

- a benchmark assessment in reading for students in grades K-9 that contains progress monitoring tools and enhanced diagnostic assessments, and/or
- a benchmark assessment in math for students in grades K-8 that contains progress monitoring tools

There is no state funding available specifically for these assessments. Also, while administering a progress monitoring tool in reading to students in grade 9 is allowed, this is optional. Benchmark assessment results that contain progress monitoring tools do not need to be reported for students in grade 9.

## **Local Benchmark Assessments**

Districts may administer a local benchmark assessment or assessments that measure proficiency in reading and/or mathematics. There is no state funding available specifically for these assessments.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Do we have to choose an assessment from the MDE-approved list?**

No; the law gives districts broad flexibility in making choices regarding the benchmark assessment or assessments they administer. These choices are:

- a benchmark assessment or assessments from an assessment provider on the MDE- approved provider list, or
- a benchmark assessment(s) or tool(s) that provide progress monitoring and enhanced diagnostics in reading and/or progress monitoring in mathematics, or
- a local benchmark assessment(s), or
- any combination of the above

### **2. Do we have to use the same assessment for all grades (K-8)?**

No; the law does not require districts to use the same benchmark assessment in all grades.

Districts interested in monitoring progress in state academic standards across grades and years may find it easier to perform this comparison if they use a consistent benchmark assessment in all grades.

### **3. Do we have to use the same assessment for reading and mathematics?**

No; the law does not require districts to use the same benchmark assessment in reading and mathematics.

### **4. Do we have to administer benchmark assessments, and progress monitor virtual students as well? Does this have to be the same for in-person students?**

There is no exception in the law for students who are not receiving in-person instruction. The law does not indicate same assessment must be administered to students learning at a distance and in-person students.

### **5. If our district is using a math assessment that is not provided by a vendor on the approved assessment provider list, but it addresses what we are teaching, can we use it for our benchmark assessment?**

The law allows districts the option to choose which benchmark assessment(s) to administer, including local assessments. The chosen benchmark assessment(s) must measure proficiency in reading and mathematics for students in grades K-8. In addition, under [P.A. sec. 98b](#), required educational goals must use a benchmark from 104a which allows districts to determine if meaningful progress is being made towards the state academic standards in mathematics. If the current assessment your district is using does that, then it is allowed.

### **6. Can we use <insert the name of your assessment>?**

The law provides districts with options when selecting the benchmark assessment(s) to

administer. These options include benchmark assessments from a vendor on the MDE-approved provider list, assessments that provide progress monitoring and enhanced diagnostics in reading and/or progress monitoring in mathematics, local assessments, or any combination thereof. The assessment(s) must be administered at least twice a year – at the start and at the end of the school year – and the assessment must allow districts to determine if meaningful progress is being made towards the state academic standards in reading and mathematics.

**7. If our district chooses to administer a benchmark assessment that provides progress monitoring and enhanced diagnostics in reading, do we have to administer it in grade 9?**

No; while administering an assessment tool that provides progress monitoring in grade 9 is allowed under the current legislation, it is not required.

**8. Is progress monitoring required?**

Pursuant to the law, districts are required to administer a “benchmark assessment” in the first nine weeks of school and again before the end of the school year. A progress monitoring assessment, or tool that provides progress monitoring and

enhanced diagnostics in reading and/or a progress monitoring assessment in mathematics, is one option districts may select to meet the benchmark assessment requirements in law.

**9. If we do NWEA or iReady (or some other benchmark assessment), can we still use some of the Smarter Balanced tools that are available?**

Yes, [Tools for Teachers](#) is available to all districts regardless of the benchmark assessment(s) they administer. Tools for Teachers is an easy- to-use website with lessons and activities created by educators to enhance instruction, save time, and prepare students for college or a career. For a quick overview, watch a demonstration on [YouTube](#) (<https://youtu.be/jJPAU1zOAp4>).

**10. Can we do NWEA (or some other benchmark assessment) and some of the Focused Interim Blocks or Block-based assessments with Smarter Balanced?**

Yes, but you will need to carefully consider your purpose and the type of information each assessment will provide. Districts should be thoughtful and careful when choosing and administering assessments and avoid administering multiple tests that provide similar information.

## Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English Learners (ELs)

The law states benchmark assessments must be administered to “all pupils in K to 8” and does not provide exceptions for Students with Disabilities or English learners.

### Students with Disabilities

The current legislation does not address assessment requirements specific to Students with Disabilities. Nevertheless, districts must remain compliant with students’ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The law requires benchmark assessments be provided within the first nine weeks of school and again before the end of the school year, to measure progress in reading and mathematics. However, although the law uses the term “benchmark assessments”, districts have broad flexibility to select a benchmark assessment offered by an assessment provider on the MDE-approved Provider List, a progress monitoring tool, or a locally determined assessment.

MDE suggests districts contact the assessment providers on the approved provider list to determine if they have options for different student populations such as SWD and EL. For students for whom commercial benchmark assessments are not appropriate (such as a student with a significant cognitive disability or one who is not able to engage in an online assessment), the district should use the assessment(s) they typically use to monitor the student’s progress in reading and mathematics.

### English Learners

The current law does not allow exceptions for English learners (ELs). If your district has ELs for whom commercial benchmark products are not appropriate because of their current level of language skills, there remains flexibility available to consider the current progress monitoring tools or local assessments you are currently using with this population of students for monitoring progress towards proficiency in reading and mathematics.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. Where can I find information on available supports and accommodations?

Available supports and accommodations will vary by benchmark assessment and provider. Contact your benchmark assessment provider directly for this information.

## How to Report Benchmark Data

Districts are required to report information on all benchmark assessments they are administering in support of section 104a. Methods of reporting benchmark data differ based on the type of benchmark assessment being utilized.

### Reporting Data from the Approved Vendor List (Curriculum Associates, DRC, NWEA, Renaissance)

The law indicates that benchmark assessment results for these approved vendors must be reported within 30 days of test administration. Districts may give their chosen benchmark provider(s) permission to provide student level benchmark data to the Michigan Data Hub (MiDataHub). Permission will also need to be granted to allow the MiDataHub to share these files with MDE's research partners the Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC) from the University of Michigan and the Educational Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) from Michigan State University who will perform the aggregations and generate the legally required reports required. The process is the same process used by most districts in the 2020-21 school year to comply with the Return to Learn law.

Districts using these assessments may also choose to perform the aggregations internally and submit the files directly through the Michigan Data Hub.

### Reporting Student-level Data through the MiDataHub

If granted permission by the district, benchmark assessment vendors will securely provide the assessment data directly to the MiDataHub. Districts using this approach must provide all necessary permissions to be in compliance with the law.

- 1) **NWEA and Star assessments** are reported through file-based integrations built by the MiDataHub team. Districts administering these assessments provide permission through a data sharing agreement with NWEA and Renaissance. This will allow MiDataHub to receive assessment results for processing.

Many districts already have these permissions and integrations in place but if your district does not it is imperative that your technology team begin this

process as soon as possible. Information on how to complete the integration steps to allow data sharing are located at the following links:

- NWEA MAP  
<https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/nwea-map/>
- Renaissance Star  
<https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/star-assessments/>

**I-Ready, the Smarter Balanced Interims, and the Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark assessments** will be reported by Curriculum Associates and Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) respectively through an API (Application Programming Interface) integration. APIs create secure direct connections between processing partners.

Districts who have not already done so may create the API integration themselves and provide the credentials to the vendor, or they may request that MiDataHub complete those steps by sending an email to [support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org).

- 2) Additional information on completing this step can be found at the following links:
  - Curriculum Associates i-Ready  
<https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/i-ready-diagnostic-and-instruction/>
  - DRC – Smarter Interim Assessments and MDE Early Literacy and mathematics Benchmark assessments  
<https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/drc-smarter-balanced-assessments/>
- 3) After the data is submitted to MiDataHub, **research partners, MEDC and EPIC**, will perform the aggregations that will inform the legislatively mandated reports. To complete the necessary aggregations, districts must create the aggregate API integration, or request one be created by MiDataHub support; this will allow the research partners to access the data. Information on how to complete this process is located at: <https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/medcep-ic-aggregation-api/>. If this was completed in the 2020-21 school year, and the RTL Aggregation is still active, this does not need to be completed again. The aggregation permission is in place if the line "Educational Analytics: Return to Learn

Aggregation 1” is listed under API Integrations in the MiDataHub Cockpit Application.

method for collecting “mode of instruction”. Information and instructions will be shared through Spotlight and this document when available.

- 4) The law requires benchmark results be disaggregated by “**mode of instruction**”. MDE and MiDataHub are collaborating on developing a

To summarize, districts must complete all steps in the table below to be in compliance with the law.

### Reporting Student-level Data Through the Michigan Data Hub

Step	Task	Complete 1 <sup>st</sup> year only	Complete each year
1	Configure your district SIS to send student roster data to MiDataHub for the current school year.		x
2	Provide permission to the assessment vendors to send benchmark assessment data to the MiDataHub: a) <b>NWEA</b> follow the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/nwea-map/">https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/nwea-map/</a> b) <b>Renaissance Star</b> follow the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/star-assessments/">https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/star-assessments/</a> c) <b>Curriculum Associates i-Ready</b> follow the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/i-ready-diagnostic-and-instruction/">https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/i-ready-diagnostic-and-instruction/</a> d) <b>DRC Smarter Interims and MDE Early Literacy and Mathematics</b> follow the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/drc-smarter-balanced-assessments/">https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/drc-smarter-balanced-assessments/</a>	X	
3	Provide permission to the MiDataHub to share benchmark records with research partners, MEDC and EPIC by following the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/medcepic-aggregation-api/">https://www.midatahub.org/Core/Stories/Permalink/medcepic-aggregation-api/</a>	x	
4	Provide “mode of Instruction” data to the MiDataHub. This process is currently being developed. Information and Instructions will be provided as soon as it is available.	TBD	TBD

### Reporting Aggregated Data through the MIDataHub

Districts choosing to generate the aggregate files themselves may do so. The following tasks must be completed to be in compliance with P.A. 48 sec.104a:

1. Download the [Fall Benchmark Aggregation Rules and Template](#) spreadsheet from the [MDE Benchmark Assessment web page](#).

This schema must be followed to ensure the researchers have comparable data and a consistent layout from which to generate the legislative mandated reports. Only files following the schema will be accepted for processing and counted towards compliance under the current benchmark law.

Note: There will be a separate Spring Benchmark



Aggregation Rules and Template spreadsheet that will be required for the spring administrations.

2. Submit the file to the MiDataHub as follows:

- a. Districts must electronically sign the MiDataHub Hosting Agreement in the MiDataHub Cockpit. Instructions for e-signing the agreement can be found at [https://www.midatahub.org/downloads/data\\_integration/electronically\\_signing\\_the\\_data\\_hosting\\_agreement\\_5.pdf](https://www.midatahub.org/downloads/data_integration/electronically_signing_the_data_hosting_agreement_5.pdf)
- b. Log into the MiDataHub Launchpad at <https://milaunchpad.org>
- c. Choose the MiDataHub Cockpit icon from the Launchpad
- d. Click on your Intermediate School District name and then click to select your district. This will bring you to the Manage District page for your district.
- e. From the Manage District page, click on the District Folder link on the right-hand side of the screen next to the SFTP Password link.

- f. From the District SFTP Folder, click on the Upload button, choose the file to upload and then click on the Open button. The file will then open. Note: In the open file dialog box, you may need to change the dropdown next to the file name field from Custom Files to All Files to see the file you wish to send.
- g. Email [support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org) to notify MiDataHub that the file has been uploaded. Files are automatically deleted after 7 days, so prompt notification will ensure the file is added to the list of aggregates created by districts. Uploading the file is considered permission to share it with the research team.

To summarize, districts must complete all steps in the table below to be in compliance with the law. These steps will need to be completed twice: once for the fall benchmark administration(s) and again for the spring benchmark administration(s).

**Reporting Aggregate-level Data Through the Michigan Data Hub**

Step	Task	Complete 1 <sup>st</sup> submission	Complete each submission
1	Generate the aggregated data file by following the instructions and layout in the appropriate Benchmark Aggregation Rules and Template spreadsheet located on the <a href="#">MDE Benchmark Assessment web page</a> .  Note there will be separate layouts for the fall and spring submissions.		x
2	Electronically sign the MiDataHub Hosting Agreement by following the instructions at: <a href="https://www.midatahub.org/downloads/data_integration/electronically_signing_the_data_hosting_agreement_5.pdf">https://www.midatahub.org/downloads/data_integration/electronically_signing_the_data_hosting_agreement_5.pdf</a>	x	
3	Upload the aggregated data file to the District SFTP Folder by following steps 2b through 2f above.		x
4	Notify the MiDataHub that the file has been uploaded by emailing <a href="mailto:support@midatahub.org">support@midatahub.org</a> .		x

## Frequently Asked Questions – Michigan Data Hub Reporting

### 1. Where do I go to get help with getting my data flowing through the MiDataHub?

For assistance in establishing the necessary integrations and granting permissions to share data:

- Email: [support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org)
- Call: 269-250-9240

### 2. What if I am not on the Michigan Data Hub?

Most districts are already on the Michigan Data Hub. If yours is not and you are using one of the integrated student information systems (SIS) – PowerSchool, Infinite Campus, MISTAR, Skyward and Skyward Qmalativ, and Synergy – then contact MiDataHub, at [support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org) or 269-250-9240, for assistance in getting your benchmark assessment results loaded.

If you are not on an integrated SIS, the MiDataHub Team has developed an import process to populate a district in MiDataHub from an MSDS General Collection file. Once a district has populated data from the MSDS file, it will be able to follow the procedures to load one or more assessments as indicated above. Contact [support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org) or 269-250-9240 if assistance is needed.

### 3. When can we start posting our data to the Data Hub?

Once the integrations and permissions have been completed, the assessment data will flow automatically to the MiDataHub. If you have not completed all steps, contact the Data Hub right away using the contact information in FAQ #1.

## Reporting Data from a Progress Monitoring Tool or a Local Benchmark Assessment

If a district uses a local benchmark assessment, including those using progress monitoring tools, a survey related to those benchmark test choices must be completed through the Grant Electronic Monitoring System/Michigan Administrative Review System (GEMS/MARS). This survey pertains to all local benchmark or interim assessments as well as tools that provide progress monitoring that administered by the district to comply with the law.

The survey does not apply to NWEA MAP, i-Ready, Star, Smarter Interim, and Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark assessments. The results from those five assessments are reported through the Michigan Data Hub.

In this survey, districts must report the following:

1. the local assessments they used
2. the grades in which the assessments were provided
3. how the assessment measures change, include any learning losses
4. how the district plans to address any losses in learning

If your district uses multiple local assessments for different grade spans, you will need to list each assessment and the grades served.

Information on when the survey will be available and how to access it will be provided in Spotlight and this document when available.

## How to Request Funding for Curriculum Associates, NWEA, and Renaissance

Districts administering Curriculum Associates i-Ready, NWEA Map, or Renaissance Star may apply for funding. Districts are eligible for \$12.50 per membership student in grades K to 8 if they are:

- administering one of the 3 assessments listed above (NWEA Map, i-Ready, Star) to students in grades K to 8 in reading and/or mathematics
- administering the assessment in the first 9 weeks of the school year and again in the spring before the end of the school year
- providing the benchmark data results through the Michigan Data Hub as outlined in the **Reporting Data from the Approved Vendor List (Curriculum Associates, DRC, NWEA,**

**Renaissance)** section of this document on page 8.

There will be an application process provided through GEMS/MARS from November 11 through December 10, 2021. Payments are planned for distribution by mid-February 2022.

Additional information will be shared through Spotlight and this document as it becomes available.

## Other Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Can parents choose to opt their students out of the benchmark assessments?

The law requires districts to administer benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics to all students in grades K-8 at the beginning of the school year and again before the end of the school year to track students' progress in those two subjects. While MDE supports parents in making education choices for their students, the law does not allow for parental opt-out. Parents should be reminded that this type of progress monitoring is especially important as we recover from a year in which instruction was often disjointed or interrupted. In addition to tracking progress, many benchmark assessments provide valuable feedback to educators (and parents), which, when used with other classroom evidence, can help teachers quickly pinpoint the instructional needs of their individual students. Districts should make their best effort to comply with the law.

### 2. How does MDE apply the requirement for benchmark assessments to an ISD/RESA?

ISDs that directly educate students in K-8, must provide benchmark assessments and report results as outlined in the How to Report Benchmark Data section of this document. ISDs administering NWEA, i-Ready, or Star assessments are eligible to apply for funding.

### 3. What suggestions do you have for virtual learners and for ensuring a test is being proctored correctly?

Most, if not all, of the benchmark providers have issued guides on how to proctor their test from

home. Work directly with your benchmark assessment provider.

### 4. How do the requirements to administer benchmark assessments in the first 9 weeks of the school year under the current legislation align with the RBG3 requirement to screen in the first 30 days of school?

The two laws are distinct, and the RBG3 screening requirements are not modified by the benchmarking requirements. The initial and extensive assessments required by RBG3 are administered to identify students in grades K-3 who need an Individual Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP). The benchmark assessments required by current law are administered to students in grades K-8 to monitor progress towards mastery of state academic standards in reading and math. Where appropriate, the same assessment tool may meet the requirements of both laws.

### 5. Who do I contact for assistance or more information?

- a. For questions on the law or this document:  
Kate Cermak at [cermakk@michigan.gov](mailto:cermakk@michigan.gov)  
517-599-9722
- b. For questions regarding the Michigan Data Hub:  
[support@midatahub.org](mailto:support@midatahub.org)  
269-250-9240
- c. General support:  
[mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov)

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